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The Ordination

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S E R M O N

PREACHED AT THE
ORDINATION

OF THE

Reverend Mr. JOSEPH WOODMAN,

TO THE PASTORAL CARE

OF THE

CHURCH and CONGREGATION

IN

SANBORNTOWN, in NEW-HAMPSHIRE,

November 13, 1771.

By MOSES ^KHALE, M.A.

PASTOR of the Second Church in NEWBURY.

S A L E M :

Printed by SAMUEL and EBENEZER HALL, near the
Exchange. MDCCLXXII.

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AN

Ordination SERMON.

I COR. i. 21:

FOR after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

THERE are two points, which, of all others, undoubtedly are most interesting, and of greatest importance to mankind—The true spiritual knowledge of the Supreme Good—And the right knowledge and apprehension of the way or means, by which we may come to the full enjoyment of the Supreme Good; which must fix the soul in real and compleat felicity.

Now this portion of holy scripture will give us light into both these weighty concernments.

1. It seems evidently implied and supposed (in the text), that God is the Supreme Good for the souls of men.

Man's happiness cannot be in himself; he is a dependant and insufficient creature; he cannot provide for his own necessities, nor continue his being or life, now he is put in the possession of it: much less can he satisfy all his desires and longings; and therefore, after the utmost he can do, must remain miserable.

It cannot lie in the enjoyment of these temporal good things: The world and the things of it, any or all of them, cannot content and satisfy the soul.—

Mankind

Mankind have been labouring after happiness, from the things of this world, ever since Cain built the first city ; but never could gain their end. *He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver ; nor he that loveth abundance, with increase. The eye is not satisfied with seeing what it apprehends the glory of this world ; nor the ear filled with hearing, even the musick of commendation and praise.* But unhappy and mistaken man is still anxious and thirsting ; stretching his desires after something beyond him, which he cannot obtain.

But what stamps vanity upon all kinds of worldly enjoyments, so visibly that one would think all must see it, is, that they are all perishable, and our bodies are perishing with them. These things cannot be of any use to us, longer than the present tie between our souls and bodies is continued ; and death will certainly dissolve this union ; and, for ought we know, may strike the fatal blow before another hour is finished : And then whatever pampered our pride, nourished our ambition, and gratified a sensual appetite, is gone forever—and the soul left naked, destitute and miserable.

In a word, That which can give happiness to the soul must be suited to its spiritual nature, able (at least) to fill its capacity, compleatly to satisfy all its desires, and commensurate with its being, i. e. will continue as long as the soul shall continue : And this can be none but God, the glorious author of our being, and fountain of all blessedness.

Some faint impression of this great, this fundamental truth seems to remain upon the mind of man, strengthened by daily experience ; and therefore the wise men of every age have been enquiring and searching after the Supreme Good—after God, but could not find him—at least to their full satisfaction. But every spiritually wise and good man, who has found the true knowledge of God, may and will (in some happy season) say, with the Psalmist, *God is my portion :*

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He hath proposed and promised to be so in his gracious covenant—and he is the portion which my soul freely and sincerely chuses and rejoices in ; *and his favour is life, and his loving kindness is better than life.*

2. The great benefit proposed and aimed at, in the text, in favour of mankind, is SALVATION.

And it is a benefit infinitely needed by us. Indeed, in man's primitive estate, salvation was not necessary ; he was made upright, in the image of God his creator ; fitted and disposed to answer the end of his being, to serve and glorify his maker and kind benefactor, and to enjoy sweet communion with him ; from whence his happiness resulted. But the case is now altered, deplorably altered ; man is fallen, and his glory and happiness is departed from him. *Man is now born like the wild asses colt ; and lives void of the true knowledge of God, the infinite fountain of being, perfection and blessedness—Having the understanding darkened ; being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of the heart.* Eph. iv. 18. And experience confirms the sad truth : Are not mankind, universally and continually, (while in their natural state) blindly groping after happiness, among creature enjoyments, though they grasp nothing but vanity and vexation of spirit ; gain no solid joy and satisfaction ; without so much as once, sincerely and directly, enquiring and seeking after God, the only true source of light and joy ? Yea, where can there one be found (till divine grace has enlightened the mind,) who from his heart cries out, *where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night ?* Job. xxv. 10.

But we may not stop here—we are all transgressors, and obnoxious to divine justice. The scripture hath concluded all under sin, Gal. iii. 22. and the whole world is *become guilty before God*, Rom. iii. 19. and liable to his infinite wrath. A sentence of condemnation

tion lies, in the holy law of God, against all (in their native state) without exception, binding them over to eternal death. And is it not a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God—the hands of his incensed justice *homo hinc holoqum ditione dion dnt*

And further, we are become filthy and unclean; the leprosy of sin hath spread through our whole man, all our faculties are disordered, and there is no spiritual soundness in us: *The carnal mind is enmity against God*—the will, and other affections, alienated from him, and biassed against him. In a word, there is a fountain of iniquity in the heart of man, of every man; and all manner of wickedness proceeds from thence, as temptations are suited to draw it out. And so far are mankind from any thoughts (proceeding merely from their own hearts) of returning to God, the only center of rest for the soul, that they are still wandering farthest from him, in the paths of sin, unwilling to be stopped; yea, delighting in their own undoing, and pressing forward to eternal misery and despair. *homo x hinc A . 8 : vi . dnt . dnt dnt dnt*

That this is really the condition of mankind, since the fall, is so evident, through the scriptures, that it seems strange that any, acquainted with the sacred writings, should not believe it; and our own experience abundantly confirms it. The native temper and workings of man's heart so exactly and fully agrees with the description given of it in the holy scriptures, that one would think every person really acquainted with himself, that with care and attention looks into that divine glass, should see his own face and know it; and blush at his own deformity; and groan under the weight of guilt and misery that lies upon him; and pant after deliverance. But, alas! blindness and insensibility is a great part of our disease.—We are bound in the chains of our own lusts, and love our bonds; subject to Satan, the grand enemy of God and

and our own souls, who leads sinners captive at his pleasure, and they willingly follow him, as the *ox goeth to the slaughter* and the *fool to the correction of the stocks*; not knowing, not considering that they are going to the pit of endless and irrecoverable perdition, *where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*

And do we not need salvation, inexpressibly need it? How great, how desirable the blessedness of delivery from a state of ignorance, blindness and enmity—a state of guilt, pollution and miserable bondage? And recovery to the light of the knowledge of God, the supreme good—the renovation of the soul to his glorious image, in real holiness—acceptance into the divine favour—introduction into the liberty of the children of the most high God, and a state of sweet, refreshing, strengthening and satisfying communion with Him, the infinite fountain of love and goodness. This, this (my friends) is the salvation referred to in the passage under consideration—This is the blessedness which all those partake of, who are saved in the sense of my text: Even the removal of all obstacles in the way; and a real return to God, the only center of rest, and all-satisfying portion for the immortal soul—This blessedness begun and increasing, here in this world, and to be perfected in the heavenly state, and to endure forever.

3. Here is plainly asserted, the insufficiency of human wisdom (in its present state) to discover the true object of our happiness; and the way to the enjoyment of him—that is, for our salvation.

The world by wisdom knew not God.—It is readily acknowledged, with gratitude to the glorious Author of our being, that the human mind is capable of great things: The soul of man is endowed with noble faculties, which serve us well in the affairs of this life and world. Yea, it is surprising to see how far human reason or wisdom has penetrated into the laws

of nature, and the lengths it has gained in various arts and sciences. But this, notwithstanding, the wisdom of mankind, in this their depraved state, is deplorably deficient with regard to their spiritual and eternal interest.

All nations, that have not enjoyed the benefit of divine revelation, have most miserably blundered in their notions of God. Though they have had the whole book of the creation open before them; and their own souls and bodies, which are fearfully and wonderfully made, to lead them to a conviction of a first cause, and the perfection of that cause—to the knowledge of the one only living and true God, and his infinite perfection; they multiplied their Gods, almost without number. Every nation, yea, every city had their gods, their tutelar deities, which they confided in. Yea, they made to themselves gods, and then worshipped them; the absurdity, and ridiculous folly of which, the prophet Isaiah sets in a clear light, with much eloquence, chap. xlv. And the manner in which they worshipped their gods was suited to the notions they had of them—and indeed no other could be expected; but that their wisdom failing them in attaining the knowledge of the true God, in his nature and attributes, it should also fail them in discovering that kind or manner of worship which is suitable to his spiritual nature and adorable perfections.

And this was the deplorable case, not only of the more ignorant and barbarous nations, but of those also who were the most civilized and polite, Greece and Rome, who were the most famous for wisdom and learning. What the apostle says in Rom. i. 22, 23. is applicable to them as well as others: *Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools: And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like unto corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping*

creeping things. And this was the case, not only of one age or generation, but of a long succession of generations : The multitude of nations through the whole world, under a great variety of circumstances, the Jews only excepted, (who were under God's peculiar care and instruction) were wholly sunk into idolatry ; from Moses's time to the coming of Christ, which was about 1500 years : A time long enough, surely, to try the utmost efforts of human wisdom. And those, well acquainted with history, observe, that, through all this long tract of time, not one single nation, yea, not one city, town, or even single society of men, greater or smaller, even down to this day, have ever been found, who professed and worshipped the one only true God, as the all-wise creator, preserver and supreme ruler and judge of the universe ; and sought their happiness in him, through time and in eternity ; except those who enjoy the benefit of divine revelation.

There have, indeed, been a very few persons, in one age and another, among the most civilized nations, called philosophers, men famed for their wisdom, who wrote well upon moral duties, so far as they went : But not one of them, with all his wisdom, was able to bring himself, or any of his pupils, to a full persuasion, that there is but one God, the father of our spirits, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being and perfections ;—and to cleave to him and his worship, in profession and practice—and to rest in him as their chief good—and live devoted to him in a holy life. So far from it, that there were hot and unavailing disputes, and very various opinions among them, about the supreme good ; some placing it in one thing, some in another, but none hitting upon the right. Besides, if any of them had, by the most diligent use of their rational powers, attained the true knowledge of God, they must have discovered, at the same time, their own unlikeness to God, and have been

been convinced that they were guilty, depraved creatures, and obnoxious to his justice :—And neither their own, nor even angelic wisdom (without a revelation) could possibly discover any way or means by which they might (honorary to his perfections and government) return to God, obtain forgiveness, be reconciled to him—recovered to his holy image, and so qualified for communion with him, and the enjoyment of compleat happiness in him, for their immortal souls. If the consideration of God's infinite goodness kindled up some degree of hope in them, the view of his immaculate holiness and inflexible justice must have shook their hope, if not quite destroyed it ; and so have prevented their submitting themselves to the mercy, and relying on the goodness of God ; and held them in a distressing state of hesitation and doubt : And the enmity of the carnal mind would have carried them on in the way of their own hearts, to their utter destruction.

Thus deplorably wretched was the condition of mankind, after the *fall* ; and so it would have remained, if a glorious and gracious God had not interposed, by a revelation of his grace, through a mediator.—And it was, undoubtedly, a wise and holy dispensation of God, so to order things, that there might be both time and means sufficient for a full trial, both of the wisdom and temper of mankind, in this interesting case : That, having full evidence and conviction of the absolute necessity of divine light and grace from heaven, we might be the better prepared to receive, with gratitude, that wondrous scheme of divine wisdom, love and goodness, which the infinite Jehovah hath established for the salvation of men. Which brings me to consider,

4. The means appointed and made use of, by the infinitely wise, holy and merciful God, for the salvation of fallen, depraved, sinful men—*The foolishness of preaching.* Certainly

Certainly the apostle here means the preaching of the gospel ; that was what he was immediately commissioned to, by Christ himself, as in the 17th verse of the context—*Christ sent me to preach the gospel.*— This was the important business he was heartily engaged in, and most diligently pursued, wherever he went ; with this view, that he might be instrumental, in the hands of his blessed Master, of saving the souls of miserable, self-ruined sinners : This being the wise, gracious and only means established by God for that purpose ; and which he will succeed to that happy end. And it is the *will* of Christ, not only that Paul and the other apostles should be employed herein, but that there should be a succession of gospel ministers—a number of men, in all ages, to the end of the world, solemnly set apart to the sacred office and work of preaching the gospel, in order to open the eyes of mankind sinners, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive the remission of sins—and be made holy and happy in heaven forever.

But why does the apostle put it into this phrase, *the foolishness of preaching* ? when every where else he speaks of it in the most honorary epithets : *The glorious gospel of the blessed God*, 1 Tim. i. 11. *The ministration of the spirit—and of righteousness—exceeding in glory*, 2 Cor. iii. 8, 9. *A gospel he was not ashamed of—for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth—For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith*, Rom. i. 16, 17. A glass in which the glory of God—the glory of all his divine perfections, may eminently and most conspicuously be seen by renewed souls, so as to be *changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord*. 2 Cor. iii. 18.

It is evident, then, that the apostle here speaks ironically ; making use of the same kind of language
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in which the wisdom of this world spake of the gospel, and the preaching of it ; letting them know, that, however contemptibly they looked upon the gospel, and spake of it, yet he was not out of countenance at it ; nor in the least discouraged from going on, with delight and resolution, in this foolishness of preaching, as they called it ; yea, he gloried in it, and esteemed his office and work his highest honour. And though he knew he should meet with great opposition from the wisdom, prejudices and corruption of the world, and suffer bonds and afflictions, yet (says he) *none of these things move me ; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.* Acts xx. 24.

The gospel here spoken of, (which is contained in the old and new testament—but more explicitly, clearly and fully, in the new) being the institution of God, who is infinite in wisdom and knowledge, in holiness, truth, and goodness, we may be sure that it is a consistent, harmonious, unchangeable and perfect scheme of truth. It is now, and always will be, the very same that it was when first published to the world, and committed to writing : And, therefore, whatever notions or doctrines any may imbibe, that are contradictory to, or inconsistent with the main, essential doctrines of the written gospel, it cannot be owing to any increase of true light and knowledge, but to some other cause : For, whatever degree of penetration into the true nature and doctrines of this glorious gospel, any Christians may attain to in this world, or even in heaven, that perfect state, still they must be harmonious and consistent. And if we consider, that the end and design of a merciful and gracious God, in this institution of the gospel, is (next to the manifestation of his own glory) the salvation of fallen men ; not only those privileged with great parts, and

and the advantages of education and learning, but also persons of but common understanding, in low life, who have no advantages but what are common to all who enjoy the bible; we must think it wisely adapted, as means, to that end. We cannot but suppose it perfectly suited to the condition and necessities of fallen, guilty, miserable creatures—And that the leading, essential doctrines, as well as the duties of the gospel, are communicated to us in as plain and intelligible a manner as their divine and spiritual nature will admit of.—The things necessary to salvation being of equal importance to the weak and illiterate, as to those of superior powers and learning, surely the language, in which they are given to us, is to be understood in its plain, natural sense and meaning. May we not, then, safely conclude, that it is owing, not so much to the weakness and limited nature of our rational powers, as to the blindness and corruption of the heart, that the gospel is misunderstood, despised and rejected by so many, who infinitely need the salvation therein revealed, and freely offered to their acceptance; and substitute something else in its room, which will, in the end, certainly disappoint their expectations. And it seems evident, that it was not so much the manner in which the gospel was preached, as the matter it contained, which gave offence to the wise men of the world, and was the occasion of their calling it foolishness. The apostle sums up the gospel, the grand subject in and about which he was, in an immediate and special manner, called to employ himself, in this phrase, *preaching the cross of Christ—and preaching Christ crucified*, 17, 18, and 23d verses of the context.—And this was to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness. And if we look forward, to the beginning of the next chapter, we find St. Paul giving it as a reason why he came not with the excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto

unto them the testimony of God—*For I determined not to know* (and consequently not to preach) *any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified.*—

Which seems plainly to imply, that Jesus Christ, in his person and offices, and his death on the cross, with the necessity, design and benefits of it, are fundamental points, and of the very essence of the gospel—Yea, that these subjects, in their true meaning, full extent and usefulness, do, in a manner, comprise and take in the whole business of preaching the gospel.

The gospel evidently supposes and teaches, that mankind are fallen—in a lost, depraved and undone estate—sinners, enemies to God—guilty, children of wrath, and under a sentence of condemnation ; infinitely needing salvation. And we are also taught, that the eternal Father of mercies having, merely from his own goodness, purposed to, save multitudes of these his self-ruined creatures from all the miseries of their fallen estate, and bring them to glory ; hath provided a mediator and saviour, even his own Son, *who being the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person*, (Heb. i. 3.) is equal to the arduous and important work ; and who hath, of his own voluntary consent, undertaken it.—And since, without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins, (Heb. ix. 22.) and without a recovery to the moral image of God we can have no communion with, and enjoyment of him ; *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*, Heb. xii. 14,—*Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*, Joh. iii. 3.—Therefore, the Son of God assumed the human nature into union with the divine, in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ ; he became Emanuel, God with us : And in our nature he fulfilled the righteousness of the law, and bore the curse for us—died on the cross a propitiatory sacrifice for sin. And hereby vindicated the honour of God's holiness and justice, law

law and government ; and opened the way for the supreme Majesty of heaven and earth, honourably to himself, to give his holy spirit to enlighten and regenerate sinful men, and dispose and enable them heartily to return to him, by his Son, and to take up their full contentment in him. So that Christ's obedience unto death, or his righteousness, including his active and passive obedience, is the sole ground, or meritorious cause, of our justification ; as it includes the full pardon of all sin, and acceptance into the favour of God, and our becoming heirs now, and finally inheritors of eternal life. And it is through, and on the account of the atonement of Christ's death, that his people have the promise, and the unspeakable privilege, of the Holy Spirit to dwell in them, as his living temples, and to carry on the work of his grace in them till they become meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. And hence it is that Christ is in scripture called *the Lord our righteousness*—God's salvation to the ends of the earth—the light of the world—the head of his body, the church—in whom it hath pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell—and of his fullness do all, the members of his mystical body, receive, and grace for grace—our peace—our hope—our strength—our life—our all in all. Agreeable hereto, the apostle concludes the chapter in which my text lies—*Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption : That, according as it is written, he that glorieth let him glory in the Lord.* All spiritual blessings, necessary to our full reconciliation to God, real conformity to the holy image and will of God in heart and life, and to our compleat and eternal happiness in him, are derived to us from and through Christ, and for his sake.

These doctrines are peculiar and essential to the gospel, and distinguish it from all other schemes of religion ; and make it indeed *gospel—good news—*

tidings of great joy to all people—and the only suitable and saving religion for depraved, sinful and guilty mankind. And yet the wise men of the world despised this glorious gospel, and accounted it foolishness ! This great mystery of godliness, *God manifest in the flesh*, &c. 1 Tim. iii. 16. was above the reach of their wisdom ; they could not comprehend it. It did not agree with their notions of things, and ways of thinking, nor suit their taste. And why should we imagine that the wisdom of this world will think any better of the gospel now, than when it was first published, since both are just the same now that they were then ? That passage in the 1 Corinth. ii. 14. *The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him*—is, doubtless, as applicable to us in this age of the world, as to those in the apostle's days. And, perhaps, it may be worth our pains seriously to consider, whether it is not reasonable to suppose, that the blind, corrupt heart of man, that is alienated from God ; the carnal mind, that is enmity against him, will not most dislike and oppose that religion which comes from God, gives the clearest view of his adorable nature and perfections, and leads directly to him ?—We may be sure the Devil most implacably hates, and is vehemently set against true religion ; because he knows that only will be effectual to overthrow his kingdom in the hearts of men.—This implacable enemy of God and mankind ever has, and ever will use his subtilty and power, to the uttermost, to hinder the success of the gospel. He knows that—for this purpose *the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the Devil*, 1 Joh. iii. 8. It is the design and tendency of the gospel to ruin Satan's interest in the world, by delivering men from his servitude and the power of sin, reconciling them to God, and bringing them to love and serve, choose, delight and rest in him as their everlasting portion.

portion. And whenever the gospel is really received into the mind and heart, it produces this happy effect. And it is a grand instance of the Devil's art and policy, to make use of men's lusts to blind and prejudice their minds and hearts against the true gospel of Christ. Our hearts are naturally full of idols, that we love more than God ; self, riches, honours, sensual pleasures, and the like. Now if Christ, by the true gospel, comes into the heart, all these must turn out ; there can be no more quiet lodging for them there, Christ can have no concord with Belial. And hence it is that men set themselves to explain, refine, and criticise upon the gospel, 'till they have turned it into a scheme (still preserving some resemblance) that suits their taste, will pacify the clamours of conscience, leave them an hope, and yet spare the life of their idols, and let them go on in the ways of their own hearts. How affecting is it to see any of our fellow mortals, prompted by Satan and their own lusts, doing his work, and endangering, if not destroying their own and others precious souls, by labouring to remove out of sight, or wholly to abolish, those great truths of the gospel, which only can relieve us ; all guilty, polluted and impotent, as we are ; and give us a solid foundation of hope and comfort : And more so still, to think of being justly chargeable ourselves with such a conduct. How awful and alarming is that repeated commination, Gal. i. 6, 7, 8.—*There be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.*

It must then be a matter of great concernment to us to *know the truth as it is in Jesus*—to have right apprehensions of the gospel ; for none but evangelical truths and principles, admitted into the mind and heart, will produce an evangelical temper of heart and
course

course of life. To me, it appears an evident, as well as an important maxim, that it is the great doctrines of the gospel alone, apprehended and viewed in the mind, in their true nature and glory, that will be effectual to beget, and excite to exercise, holy dispositions and affections of soul, correspondent to the things beheld; and really engage to a holy life and conversation. And that no human teaching whatever, without the efficacious influences of the Holy Spirit, enlightening the mind and renewing the heart, will bring sinners so to behold the glory of God in the glass of the gospel, as to be *changed into the same image, from glory to glory*—2 Cor. iii. 18. These thoughts lead me to observe,

5. Who will enjoy the inestimable blessings of this great salvation—them that believe.

Notwithstanding the gospel is adapted, perfectly adapted (as means) to answer the designed end, yet it is an evident and an affecting truth, that all to whom the gospel is preached, and who have the bible in their hands, are not saved. To some, it is a savour of life unto life; but to others, a savour of death unto death. We cannot doubt but multitudes, who live under the gospel ministry, receive no saving benefit from it; but live and die in their sins, and finally perish—When my text tells us, that it pleased God, by the preaching of the gospel, to save them that believe, it evidently excludes all unbelievers, and leaves them in their sinful, guilty state, to endure forever the punishment justly due to them for their wickedness. And when our blessed Lord gave his disciples their commission, saying, *Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature*; he adds, *He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned*. Mark xvi. 15, 16. It must therefore be of the greatest concernment to us, that we understand what it is to believe; and that we really become believers,

If

If I were to give a description of gospel or saving faith, it should be that in the Assembly's catechisms as being concise, plain and scriptural.—“Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is freely offered to us in the gospel.” This description of faith supposes or implies, as previous to it, a real assent of the mind to the holy scriptures, as a revelation from God; the truth and certainty of which may be most firmly relied upon: A real conviction and sense of our sin and guilt—condemned by the holy and righteous law of God to eternal death—that we are without righteousness and strength, and utterly unable to deliver and save ourselves: And also, a true knowledge and apprehension of Jesus Christ, in his person, offices and benefits, as exhibited in the gospel—a Saviour perfectly suited, in every respect, to the sinner's deplorable case; who hath, by his obedience and death, purchased compleat salvation, fully answerable to all the necessities of the soul, polluted, guilty and enslaved by sin and Satan: and having authority and right, from God the Father, and power and will to bestow this whole salvation upon every one of sinful mankind that believes in, or receives him upon the gospel offer. The Holy Spirit, by giving a realizing view of these most interesting truths, overcomes the native reluctance, and persuades and enables the soul sincerely and heartily to receive Jesus Christ, as he is freely offered, and for all the purposes for which he is offered in the gospel; and to rest, or rely upon him alone, for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption; i. e. for compleat salvation. That receiving, coming to, believing and trusting in Christ, are synonymous, and used to signify and express the same act, or exercise of the soul, seems evident from Joh. i. 12. *But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe* on

on his name, and Joh. vi. 35. Eph. i. 12, 13. Most of these expressions relate to the acts of the will, and not to the understanding.

This receiving and resting on Christ, as offered in the gospel, appears, then, to be of the very essence of evangelical or saving faith. This seems to be the uniting act, by which the soul is in Christ, becomes a living branch in him, the true vine ; and receiving vital influence from him, brings forth fruit unto God. By this act, the soul is, agreeable to the gospel covenant, interested in Christ's righteousness, and enjoys the benefit of it ; is justified, accepted of God, and made an heir of eternal life. Thus the soul, in a way perfectly agreeable to its rational nature, is drawn to a voluntary, sincere and hearty compliance with, and is interested in all the privileges and blessings of the glorious gospel. As things appear to me, it must be the very nature and operation of this faith to purify the heart, and work by love : It will produce those holy dispositions and affections of heart, and practices of life, by which true believers are characterized in the word of God.

If we duly consider the view of things, under which the distressed sinner is perswaded and encouraged, with his whole heart, to receive Christ Jesus the Lord ; we must think he will be humble and penitent ; will renounce all confidence in his own wisdom, righteousness and strength ; rejoice in Christ Jesus, without any confidence in the flesh : he will take all the shame and blame of his wickedness to himself, and with a grateful heart give all the glory unto God. He must feel himself under the most strong and endearing obligations to live, not to himself, but, to him who loved and died for him : And it will be his desire and endeavour *to deny all ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world ; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of*

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the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

Suffer me to proceed one step further, and observe,

6. That this whole affair of our salvation, by Jesus Christ, takes its rise, and flows from the free, sovereign pleasure of God—*It pleased God.*—What but his own infinite love and goodness could move the eternal Father of Lights to send his only begotten Son into the world, to work out redemption by his own blood, for those that had ungratefully rebelled against him, deserted his interest, and rendered themselves justly obnoxious to his revenging wrath? To this alone it is ascribed in the gospel; Joh. iii. 16. Eph. i. 4—7. And the application of redemption, by the Holy Spirit, flows from the same fountain, even the good pleasure of God. Thus we read, Eph. ii. and on—*But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickned us together with Christ; and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us, through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.—For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

What hath been offered under the preceeding heads would admit of a large and profitable improvement; but I must only hint a few things.

In a review of what hath been said, can we avoid seeing the necessity of a thorough conviction, that God alone can be a suitable and satisfying portion for our souls; that so we may be prevented from a vain pursuit after happiness from this world, and the things
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of it ;—seriously attend to that which stands between God and our souls, and keeps us from rest in him, and earnestly seek its removal—seek salvation? How should we lament our apostacy from God in Adam! The deplorable effects of which are, our alienation from God, the supreme good—our blindness and inattention to spiritual things that infinitely concern us—and a strong propensity of heart to those ways which lead to eternal misery. Let us learn not to lean to our own understanding, nor set up our own wisdom as a sufficient guide ;—but, as becomes us, humbly submit to divine revelation, believing that God is wiser than men. Let us, with the deepest humility and gratitude, adore the wisdom and grace of God, in opening the way, and granting us the means of salvation ;—and duly prize and improve the blessed gospel.

How great is the folly, ingratitude and sin, of rejecting the gospel, the only means appointed by God for the saving sinful men,—and taking a way of our own devising, for that purpose ;—or to attempt, from the maxims of human wisdom and philosophy, to correct or amend the gospel of Christ. It is a scheme perfect in itself ; and to alter it, is to spoil it, with respect to ourselves.

Let us beware of hoping for salvation, even by the gospel, without believing ; and of taking that to be faith which has no efficacy to purify the heart and life from sin. How careful should all those, who really partake of the gospel salvation, be, to preserve on their minds and hearts, and in proper ways to manifest, a deep sense of the free mercy and grace of God to them.

Finally, Those who feel their need of, and desire salvation, must seek it only in the gospel way, if they would hope for success. But, agreeable to custom on such occasions, several particular addresses will be expected.

Permit me then, *my reverend and dear Brethren,* to stir up your pure minds, by way of remembrance—

brance—that our whole business, as ministers of Christ, is to preach this glorious gospel ; to explain, apply and enforce it on our people, in the plainest and best manner we can ; as the only means of salvation to the souls of sinful men. Yea, where and whenever we appear to act in character, our grand subject must be this glorious gospel ; and our sincere desire and aim should be, to shew the necessity, the true nature, the grace, blessings and duties of the gospel ; as we would answer the important end of our office, the glorifying Christ, and being instrumental of saving those to whom we minister.

How solicitous and diligent should we be, truly to understand the gospel ourselves, and to experience its saving efficacy upon our own souls, transforming us into the image of Christ ; that so our spirit and conversation may be an evidence of the blessed nature and tendency of the gospel, and help to explain and recommend it to others. And with what care and jealousy over ourselves, should we search and study the holy oracles ? endeavouring, as much as possible, to lay aside every prejudice ; and to beware of the dreadful prejudice that is in the corrupt, unsanctified heart of man, against the true gospel of Christ ; laying our minds and hearts open to the light and conviction of the truth. How unhappy would an essential mistake be here, where so great an interest is depending ? If we get a scheme of religion professedly, and as we think, from the holy scriptures ; yet if it be really different from the gospel of Christ, and as St. Paul expresses it, another gospel, will our hope built upon it stand ? Shall we have the gracious presence of Christ with us, strengthening, supporting and comforting us in our work ? Shall we save those we preach to ; and secure and preserve the regards due to faithful ministers of Christ ? Shall we be accepted of Christ, our professed Master and Lord ; and finally be received to the rewards of faithful servants ? If

If we have got another gospel, essentially different from Christ's ; be we ever so zealous and laborious in preaching and propagating of it, yet our hope, instead of issuing in fruition, will desert us in time of extremity : we shall not have the countenance and consolations of Christ in our labour : And instead of leading our hearers to righteousness and life, by Jesus Christ, we shall (so far as our influence goes) involve them in darkness and death ; shall be finally rejected of Christ, and left to the deplorable consequences of our pride, vanity and wickedness : The very thought of which is enough to make one shudder.

O may it engage us, with humble, teachable minds, to lay ourselves as at the feet of the blessed Jesus, in the reading and studying of his gospel ; fervently pleading for his Holy Spirit, to illuminate our minds, and guide us into all truth.

One would think such considerations should move us to drop all anger, resentment, sarcasms, unkind reflections, and all bitterness of spirit, in our religious debates ; and with an humble mind, a benevolent and affectionate heart, to endeavour to communicate all the light we can ; and kindly help each other to grow in the knowledge of Christ and his truth ; that we might, as with one heart and tongue, preach the precious gospel, hold up Christ Jesus, and him crucified, to our perishing fellow men, as their only refuge. We have, and shall have, difficulty and trouble enough, from our own weakness and infirmities, from that body of death within us, from worldly and wicked men, and especially from Satan, the implacable enemy of Christ and of precious souls. We shall, we do feel the pressure of these burdens, if we have the true gospel ingrafted into our hearts, and are sincerely and faithfully preaching it to others. But we need not be discouraged at, nor faint under our trials ; the honour of Christ is greatly concerned ; and He, whom

we serve in this warfare against the Devil's kingdom, is able, and will sustain and carry us through. In Him are unsearchable riches—infinite benevolence;—his watchful, all-seeing eye is ever upon, and his tenderest care exercised over, his faithful servants; and he has said, and will make it good, *my grace is sufficient for you*. He gave us all the qualifications we have, for our arduous and important work; and he can increase them, above all our difficulties; and give us to say, experimentally, *through Christ strengthening me I can do all things*. O then let us wait on him continually, by fervent, believing supplication, with thanksgiving; he is able to do for us abundantly above all we can ask or think: He will support, help and comfort us in, and carry us thro' our work, and give us that transporting reception in the end, *well done good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord*.

In the next place a word will be expected from me, —To you, dear Sir, who will presently be invested with the office of a minister of the gospel of Christ; and all the duties of that office will then be incumbent upon you: And may you accept it with all readiness and cheerfulness of mind, animated with the love of Christ, of the truth, and of precious souls; and yet with humility, self-diffidence, and an entire dependance upon Christ for grace to fulfil your ministry.

The office is, indeed, honourable, and the faithful execution of it of the greatest importance, and will require close attention, much study, and labour. The ends aimed at are the highest any creature can have in view; —the manifesting the glory of God, in his various and adorable attributes;—and the eternal salvation of immortal souls. And keep it ever in your mind, dear Sir, that these ends are to be obtained, only, by preaching, and living the pure gospel. I believe you have right apprehensions of it, and I hope you have experienced its benign and blessed efficacy on your own

own heart, and will be able to speak the things that you know. But remember the gospel contains an unsearchable and inexhaustible treasure of wisdom, love, grace, comfort, glory : Study, therefore, this gospel with the closest attention and diligence ; crying, with a humble, thirsting soul, *Lord open mine eyes, that I may behold the wondrous things contained therein.*— And the further your mind reaches into this blessed mystery of the gospel, the higher you will esteem it ; the more you know of Jesus Christ, the more precious will he be to you ; and the more pleasure and delight will you have, in preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ unto others.

Tribulation, in this world, is the lot of all the disciples, and especially of the faithful ministers of Christ ; but be not dismayed at any apprehended or felt trials, from your own sinful heart, from Satan, or his instruments ; endure hardness as a good soldier : If any call the preaching of the gospel foolishness, be not ashamed of it, nor induced to clip the truth ; but learn, from the apostles example, to glory in the cross of Christ. Hang on the all-sufficiency of Christ by faith, tell him all your troubles, plead for needed supplies of grace ;—he will not fail the expectations of them that truly trust in him ;—he will not desert his own cause ;—he never did, he never will, he never can forsake his faithful servants ; and if you are such a one, surely you shall not be the first that ever had reason to complain :—No, he will succour you ; and as your day is, so shall your strength be. Go on in his name and strength ;—go on rejoicing in your work ; and may the hand of the Lord be with you, to assist and succeed you. And may you finally be approved and accepted—and have many seals of your ministry for your joy and crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus.

I may not conclude without offering a few words to the church and people in this place.

Dear

Dear Brethren and Friends, you have for some time, by fervent prayer, we suppose, as well as by other suitable means, been seeking to obtain a minister of Christ, and thereby the stated enjoyment of the word and ordinances of the gospel. God is now fulfilling your desires : you will presently see the man, whom you have unanimously chosen, solemnly separated to that sacred service among you.—Receive him in the Lord, with all thankfulness, and hold him in reputation for his work's sake.

God hath given you a good soil, and smiled on your new beginnings, and given you a comfortable prospect, with regard to your temporal interest ; but his granting you the ministry of the gospel is a greater blessing : This respects your eternal interest. Manifest your high esteem of the precious gospel, and your tender regard for the eternal happiness of your precious souls, by your constant, careful and prayerful attendance on the preaching of it.

Preserve unity, peace and love amongst yourselves : —Do all you can, in a proper way, to encourage the heart and strengthen the hands of your minister : particularly, pray earnestly for him, and take special care to profit under his ministry ; and the rather because it will be your own benefit and comfort. Let his heart rejoice in seeing many of you, as his spiritual children, walking in the truth.

Keep it in your minds, that you cannot be saved by the gospel without believing ; and pray earnestly, that the gospel may come unto you, not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance ; and work effectually in you, to the uniting the soul to Christ by a living faith, that you may grow up into him who is the head in all things ; And finally enjoy, fully enjoy the great promise of the gospel, which God, who cannot lie, hath promised us in Christ Jesus, even eternal life.

After SERMON the following CHARGE
was given by the Rev'd Mr. WALKER
of CONCORD, in NEW-HAMPSHIRE.

DEAR SIR,

WE, being satisfied of the competency of your gifts and graces for the work of the ministry, and approving of your call to settle here, as regular, and rejoicing at your chearful acceptance thereof, do now ordain you a minister of the everlasting gospel, and pastor of Christ's flock in this place in particular.

And accordingly we would now most solemnly charge you, in the name of the great Head of the Church, to take heed to the ministry which you have received of the Lord Jesus, and fulfil it; to take the oversight of the flock, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind. Preach the word; be instant in season, and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.—In doctrine, shew uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity and sound speech, which cannot be condemned.

That you may be enabled hereto, you are to give yourself to reading, meditation and prayer. Particularly you are carefully, impartially and prayerfully to study the holy scriptures. The Christian, the Protestant, the Protestant-Dissenter, can consistently yield his assent to no human scheme, by whomsoever drawn up, as the measure and standard of his faith and practice: But will make his last appeal to the oracles of divine truth.—By this rule he will try all doctrines, whether they be of God, or of man's invention.

Faithfulness to your divine Master will excite you to deliver the whole of his counsel, touching the way of sinners recovery to himself, so far as the same shall be made

made known to you ; and the same principle will inspire you with due caution not to exceed his orders. While you can say, Thus saith Christ, or thus saith Paul, or any of the inspired writers, you are safe : but when you break over that sacred inclosure, you wander without a guide.

You are to administer the sacraments of the New Testament, Baptism and the Lord's-supper, in their due order, and to meet subjects, according to the rules and directions contained in the sacred scriptures.

You are to lead in the discipline of the church.—Discipline, if not absolutely necessary to the very *being* of the church, yet doubtless is so to its *beauty, purity, and edification* ; so that without any regard to it, an assembly of people would rather resemble an *Ephesian rout*, than a *congregation of worshippers of the one true God*. But to manage this aright, amidst the various clashing interests, humours, passions, and caprices of men, will require all your prudence and integrity.—The fountain of wisdom is able to direct you in the most intricate state of affairs. Thither you are to apply in faith, and with fervency. You are to know no man after the flesh, so far as to do any thing by partiality. Avoid, as far as possible, the two faulty extremes, of negligence with respect to the affairs of Christ's household, on the one hand ; and a supercilious lording it over his heritage, on the other.

You are to be an example to believers in your life and conversation, as well as word and doctrine. Exhibit as bright a pattern, as may be, of the christian life. The want of this, if it be evident and habitual, would not only obstruct your own salvation, but be a most fatal bar to the success of your ministry among your people. I speak not this by way of suspicion or censure, but of caution ; for I am perswaded better things of you, dear Sir ; that it will be your care and endeavour to live according to that gospel you preach
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to others ; to adorn both the christian and ministerial character ; to set before your people a bright example of piety, justice and self-government ; to convince them, that real religion is not that sour, morose thing, it has been represented by *dreaming Monks*, and *visionary Recluses* : that it is so far from being an enemy to all becoming freedoms in conversation, that it really adds beauty and grace to every other accomplishment, and is a continual display of that *wisdom which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.*

Thus preaching, and thus living, we hope and pray that an abundant blessing may accompany your ministry to the conversion of sinners and edification of saints in their most holy faith.

And now, Sir, if you keep this charge inviolate, we are warranted to assure you, that *when the chief Shepherd shall appear*, you may expect to receive from him *a crown of glory that fadeth not away.*

THE RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP,

given by the Reverend Mr. STEARNS
of EPPING.

*Men, Brethren, and Fathers, and all ye that fear God,
—give audience ;—*

WHAT a rich mercy is it to our apostate race, that *God hath sent his Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved?* What matter of joy and thanksgiving, that *the blessing of Abraham hath come upon the Gentiles*, and the light of the glorious gospel shined over into these remote corners of the earth, which had been the abodes of darkness, the habitations of cruelty, time immemorial :—That the blessed Redeemer's kingdom is here set up, where Satan's seat had long been :—That we are called, by the gospel, to the fellowship of the saints, and enjoy the inestimable liberties and privileges thereof :—That God hath prepared such abundant room for his church in this land, and is here *lengthening the cords, strengthening the stakes, and spreading forth the curtains of his tabernacle, and making the wilderness to blossom as the rose?* For this may our hearts expand with the warmest, sincerest gratitude to the Father of lights ;—for this let the sacrifices of praise be offered to God continually. And in particular, the transactions of the present day are abundant matter of joy and praise : We have seen a church planted, to-day, in gospel order, and with a gospel pastor, here in Sanborntown, but very lately a waste and howling wilderness.

Brethren, of this new-gathered church, we have seen you forming yourselves into gospel order, this
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day, as a church of Christ, and expressing and engaging your charity and fellowship each to other in the ways of the Lord ; we have heard the good profession you have witnessed : Fill up the same with practical piety ; *bold fast your profession*, and let no man take your crown.

We rejoice in the distinguishing smiles of heaven, upon you, and this place, in your so early and peaceful settlement in gospel order.

We rejoice to see another added to the number of our churches.

We pray, the Lord remember you; *the love of your espousals, the kindness of your youth, who are going after him in the wilderness, a land that, lately, was not sown.*

We pray the merciful Saviour, *who despiseth not the day of small things*, who hath said, *where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*, to dwell among you, and bless you, to establish you in the faith and order of the gospel, and *increase you with all the increases of God.*

And now, Brethren, the churches convened on this solemn, yet joyful occasion, which, according to our constitution, virtually represent all the churches, by me, acknowledge, and salute you as a sister church, of the same standing, and rights, in the gospel, with ourselves. We testify to you our charity, we engage you our fellowship, and ready assistance, when and whereinssoever you shall need and desire the same : — And withal we pray, we expect the like from you. — Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity ; what sacred bonds and ties are professors of Christianity under so to do ?

There is one body, the church, and one spirit animating all the living members of it : One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, and we are all called in one hope of our calling ; let us therefore all carefully endeavour to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace,

Finally,

Finally, Brethren, be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace be with you; farewell. Our Lord Jesus Christ is ever mindful of his church for good; as by his sufferings and death he purchased for it, so when he ascended up on high he bestowed upon it, many precious gifts, among which were Pastors and Teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, being no more, as children, tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men, and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive.— Will not all that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and are truly concerned for the interest of his kingdom, rejoice and praise his name, that he is mercifully continuing the gospel-ministry to these all-important ends?

May this beauty of the Lord ever abide on our Zion; may she ever have of her learned and pious sons to take her by the hand and lead her in the way wherein she ought to go. We pray the Lord of the harvest, evermore, to raise up, and send forth a supply of able faithful labourers into his harvest: We rejoice, and praise the Lord, on seeing one put into this part of the vineyard, who, we trust, will, through grace, approve himself such. And now, dear Sir, as we are satisfied in your qualifications for, and call unto the work of the ministry, and have seen you regularly introduced into the sacred office, by prayer, and the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery, according to apostolick example, in the name and by the order of the venerable council convened on this occasion, I now give you the Right Hand of Fellowship, in token of our acknowledgment of the validity of your ordination, and your equal dignity and authority with your brethren in the ministry,

ministry, as a commissioned ambassador of Jesus Christ, and promise a ready communion and fellowship with you, as such, in the Lord—a friendly assistance, by advice or otherwise, as you shall stand in need thereof; and withal we expect the like from you.

May the Lord be ever with you, to strengthen your hands, and encourage your heart, in the great work whereunto you have been separated this day; may he make you a burning and shining light in this golden candlestick, which he hath set up, and placed you in, this day, and give you many of this people, and their children (Oh would to God it might be all of them!) for the seals of your ministry, for your joy and crown in the day of the Lord Jesus. And may we all, whom the Lord has been pleased to make stewards of his house, as well as you who have taken part of this ministry, with us, this day, obtain grace of him to be faithful, and mercy to be successful, that when the chief Shepherd shall appear and call us to give account of our stewardship, we may do it with joy, and not with grief;—even so the Lord help us. AMEN.

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